2: O'Shea G-3 (1944-1945) 1947 MK4 Trucial Oman MK4

so as to form a nest. Some pearl dealers keep as many as forty-five sets, graduated according to their perforations. The weighing of pearls is a most complicated matter, but very simply a pearl is rated in *chaus*, a Bombay measure, which is one three hundred and thirtieth part of a *maskal*, which is made up in turn by 100 *dokras*. A *chau* is really a unit of value as well as a weight, and changes according to the number of pearls being valued together. Thus, two pearls, weighing exactly half a third of a pearl, would not be estimated so highly in *chaus* as the single pearl. The finest pearl I saw in Jam Shan's collection was valued at £8,000, or nearly £73 a *chau*.

If the valuation of pearls is a complicated affair the financial organization of the industry is even more so. The industry teems with merchants, brokers, middlemen, agents, and moneylenders. First the pearl fleet has to be financed before it can go to sea, and money has to be provided for the crews and divers. This is advanced partly by the owners of the boats and partly by a special class of moneylenders called *Musaqqams*, who demand ten or twenty-five per cent interest. Every boat is commanded by a captain, or *Nakhuda*, who receives a percentage of the catch; sometimes he is the owner of the boat. Next in importance to him is the *Ghasah*, or diver, followed by the *Siyub*, or hauler, the *Radhif*, or extra hand, and the *Walaid*, or apprentice, whose duty it is to catch fish, cook, look after the pipes and coffee, and attend to other minor duties.

The *ghasah*, whose only work is to dive, are mostly poor Arabs and free negroes or slaves, and their efficiency depends more on their skill and daring than on the strength of their constitution. A slave diver who is not afraid to enter deep and muddy water containing weeds is ordinarily valued at considerably over a thousand rupees. The *siyub*, whose duties are merely to manage the boat and to lower and pull up the divers, are usually landsmen whom age or other causes have obliged to abandon diving. The total crew of a pearl boat varies from ten to forty men, the average number being sixteen. All sorts of boats are used for pearling, even jollyboats being fitted out for the purpose, but the majority are sambuks, batils, bagarahs and shuais. A large boat, holding forty men, will cost 30,000 rupees or more to construct and fit out.

There are two principal seasons for pearl diving: the *Ghaus-al-Bard*, or cold-diving season, which lasts from April to May, and the *Ghaus-al-Kabir*, or 'great diving', beginning in June after the end

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of sharks made their appearance off the banks and attacked nearly thirty divers, two of whom were killed under water, the others being rescued in a precarious condition.

Diving is carried out every day during fine weather, work commencing an hour after sunrise and ceasing an hour before sunset. The interval between the early morning prayer and the start of diving is spent by the crews in opening the oysters collected on the previous day. This is done with crooked knives called *mufaliq*, under the superintendence of the *Nakhuda*, who weighs and registers the pearls. The stench arising from this operation must be smelt to be believed. Before they start work the divers are allowed a light meal of half a pound of dates and a few cups of coffee each. Once they have entered the water work is continued without intermission until *Dhuhr*, about 2 p.m., when it is suspended for prayers, a few cups of coffee, and an hour's rest. After *Maghrib*, or evening prayers, the divers take a substantial meal of fish, rice and dates and then, after a little smoking and coffee-drinking, retire to rest for the night.

Divers sometimes suffer from the stings of the devil-fish, and when there are many of these about they wear a long white shirt to protect them from their embraces. Although a very fatiguing occupation, diving is not particularly injurious to the health, and is practised even by old men. In some cases it gives rise to diseases of the respiratory system and to deafness. Skin disease is a common ailment amongst divers, who guard against it by rubbing themselves with *jaft*, a concoction made from the inner shell of the Persian acorn. Senna leaves and other herbs are taken in cases of sickness, but if serious illness occurs, recourse is had to cautery with a hot iron.

Pearl diving is nearly always an hereditary occupation. The reason for this is purely economic. During the off-season the divers have to provide for their families and are often too lazy to undertake any other kind of work, although a few take up fishing. Being an extravagant class, they soon spend the money they have made from diving, and are obliged to borrow from the *Nakhuda*. They are seldom able to repay this debt, the interest on which accumulates, and the only way in which it can be repaid is by means of annual instalments deducted from their diving pay and bonuses. Thus a family of divers, to the second or third generation, may be indebted to a *Nakhuda* or his heirs and, unless the diver finds an alternative means of repaying the debt, he must continue diving to the end of his days, and his son after him.

135 offshore. The interior country in the north is hilly, with an average elevation of about 500 feet, but toward the southwest it becomes progressively flatter and more desolate. The portion from Abu Dhabi to Khor al Odaid is barren and virtually uninhabited.

132 The climate is particularly trying in the summer months from May to October, when temperatures of 115° F. and humidity readings of 90 to 98 per cent are frequently recorded. In contrast, the days from November to February are agreeably cool, while the nights often are cold. The rainfall is irregular, and normally approximates 4 to 5 inches a year. It is usually concentrated in sudden and violent storms during the mid-winter months.

POPULATION AND SOCIO-ECONOMIC CONDITIONS

141 162 The population of Trucial Oman is not accurately known, but in 1951 it was estimated at about 80,000, including Bedouin 144 tribes totaling possibly 8,000. The settled inhabitants are of mixed racial stock. They are predominantly Arabs, but Negro admixtures, descendants of former slaves from Africa, and communities of Baluchis, Iranians and Indians are prominent. Except for 795 a few Hindus, the majority are Moslems. Most of the Arabs belong to the Wahhabi branch of the Sunni sect of Islam.

468 228 The chief occupations of the people are pearl diving, fishing, shipbuilding and date cultivation. Some of the best pearling reefs in the Persian Gulf are found off the Trucial Coast, and Dibai long has been recognized as the center of activity in the southern Gulf region. The industry has declined within recent years, but, in more favorable times, thousands of pearling vessels are said to have put out from Trucial Oman ports each season from early summer to November.

241 Agriculture is of secondary importance, being confined to areas in which water is available for irrigation. Date groves exist along the coast as far west as Abu Dhabi, and small amounts of millet, wheat, tobacco